

# **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

**2021 – 2026**



## **Introduction:**

Municipal governments play an important role in the planning and development of communities: in our streets, parks, libraries, meeting places, programs, services, public buildings and elections. The Province of Ontario recognized that accessibility is a shared responsibility and passed the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) on December 14, 2001 to require provincial and municipal governments and key broader public sector organizations to review their policies, programs and services.

In June 2005, the Province of Ontario furthered its commitment to accessibility by expanding previous legislation to include the private sector with the goal to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities in five important areas of their lives within specified time limits:

- customer service
- transportation
- information and communications
- design of public places
- employment

The multi-year plan sets out strategies to identify and remove barriers to accessibility as required by the AODA.

## **Council commitment to accessibility planning**

The Council of the Town of Espanola is committed to:

- a) the continual improvement of access to all municipally owned facilities, premises and services for all those with disabilities;
- b) the provision of quality services to all members of the community with disabilities.

The Council has authorized the CAO/Treasurer to prepare an accessibility plan that will enable the Council to meet these commitments.

## **Objective**

The objectives of this Accessibility Plan are to:

1. Report on the measures the Town has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
2. Describe the measures in place to ensure that the Town assesses its policies, programs, practices and services to ensure effectiveness for accessibility for people with disabilities.
3. Describe the measures the Town intends to take in the coming years to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
5. Describe how the Town will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

## **Accessibility Policies**

Integrated Accessible Standards Statement  
Accessible Customer Service Policy  
Accessible Employment Standards

## **Strategy**

### **2021-2026 Multi-Year Plan Strategy**

The Municipality is committed to remove and prevent barriers that limit individuals with disabilities accessing services. The municipality will continue to identify any opportunities to enhance accessibility needs within the community and implement as permitted. We will work to create an inclusive community that will allow everyone equal opportunity to access services, programs and facilities, helping to meet the goal of a fully accessible Ontario by the year 2025.

### **How will we achieve this?**

Staff will continue to apply for federal and provincial funding to address ongoing accessibility issues, while identifying any opportunities to enhance accessibility needs within the community and implement as permitted.

By working with all stakeholders, the Town of Espanola will meet these goals by focusing on improvements that can be made within our existing services and infrastructure as well as ensuring any new facilities, programs and services

are AODA compliant. All suggestions and comments to improve accessibility within Espanola are welcomed and can be submitted to the Municipal Office at 100 Tudhope Street, Suite #2 or by emailing [town@espanola.ca](mailto:town@espanola.ca)

## **2021**

### **Key Accomplishments**

#### **Council Meetings**

As we continue to work through the fourth wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, Council continues to meet virtually, while streaming and recording the meeting. In addition to regular meetings, Council has amended the streaming and recording of Council Meetings to include special meetings of council. Special meetings of council, excluding those held in camera will be placed on the website, allowing anyone to access the video in an accessible electronic format.

#### **Pre-design of PWD Garage**

During the budget deliberations, \$13,000 was put into the budget for the purpose of procuring a pre-design report for the PWD garage to meet the Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act.

#### **Increased Accessibility for Care Van**

It was recognized that in order to accommodate users of the Care Van, an amendment to the Traffic Bylaw was needed. Council adopted the amendment by allowing the Care Van to park on highways to pick up and drop off users, when driveways measurement restrictions do not allow the Care Van to deploy the wheelchair lift.

In addition, upon receiving a \$2000 donation from Enbridge Gas, the municipality used those funds to provide riders with free service for the months of November and December, increasing accessibility for all.

#### **Website**

Best practices continue to be followed. Fillable PDF documents are used whenever possible.

#### **Community Dog Park**

Funding was placed in the 2021 budget to hold a public consultation session on the development of a community dog park. Through this process, those with accessibility concerns can bring them to the attention of staff prior to the development of the Park.

#### **Community Splash Pad**

Funding was placed in the 2021 budget for the potential development of a Splash Pad. A sub-committee of the Recreation and Cultural Advisory C12-01328 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Committee was created to focus on best locations, where accessibility factors were taken into consideration.

### **Approved Funding for Pine Grove Park**

The municipality was successful in their application for playground rehabilitation for up to \$100,000. Accessible playground equipment, accessible picnic table and pathways will be constructed at Pine Grove Park.

## **Previous Accomplishments**

### **2016-2020 Key Accomplishments**

#### **2020**

The Town of Espanola is now using eScribe software, which allows anyone to watch live streamed or recorded meetings at home. In addition to this, agendas and meeting minutes are also online, which allows greater access to these documents.

The Municipality was successful in their application to the Ministry of Transportation for Connecting Link Funding. During this construction, upgrades to sidewalks and curbs were completed, making them fully accessible. Traffic lights were updated on Hwy 6 and now include accessible push buttons that emit a chirping sound when activated.

The municipality launched the newly designed website which conforms to the W3C's WCAG 2.0 standards. Accessibility requirements and best practices were included in training.

The global pandemic has caused Council for the Town of Espanola to conduct their Regular and Special Meetings electronically. Zoom was the method of choice to accommodate this necessity. Zoom allows participants and viewers to access meetings without having to leave their homes and adjust the volume of the meeting to meet their requirements.

#### **2019**

The Municipality entered into an Agreement with Sandbox Solutions for website redevelopment which includes AODA compliance. This project is to be completed in 2020.

#### **2018**

A new Fire Hall was built meeting requirements of the AODA as they apply to the Ontario Building Code.

Under the Enabling Accessibilities in Communities grant the Municipality was able to extend our accessible trail which included leveling, grading and paving the trail as well as levelling and grading a path to the beach for the installation of mobi matting to create safe and accessible passage to the Clear Lake Park outdoor fitness park and beach area.

2018 Municipal Elections were conducted using the Vote by Mail alternate voting method to ensure all residents eligible to vote had access to do so. On voting day the Recreation Complex was used for those who chose to cast their ballot personally, The Complex is considered to be the barrier free facility of choice within the community.

## **2017**

The municipality purchased a new special transit bus under the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund. With the increasing need for the Care Van Transit service in Espanola the new bus can accommodate an 8 passenger maximum with 4 of those being wheelchair passengers.

A Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan was adopted by Council. This Plan is the first of its kind for Espanola. It was developed in consultation with the public, stakeholders, town staff and Council. It was identified that the existing Park at the Red McCarthy Memorial Ball Field could potentially be relocated or re-configured, it was recommended that this would be an ideal opportunity to invest in accessible playground equipment at this site.

The Recreation Complex unveiled a publicly-accessible recreation program registration and facility booking tool on the municipal website, allowing for a more accessible and easy way to register for programs.

A customer service monitoring system was developed for the Recreation Centre to assess resident and user needs and requests for improvements to service delivery.

The Espanola Public Library and Recreation Complex have developed programs and day camps to ensure every child can access these programs on all physical and cognitive levels.

Pool staff and Espanola Regional Health have worked together to identify pool programs that will assist in mobility fitness through stretching and aqua therapy.

## **2016**

Development and completion of the outdoor active living park and accessible trail at Clear Lake. This was made possible through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities fund.

## **2010-2015 Key Accomplishments**

### **2015**

The municipal office underwent major renovations to make the building fully accessible; this included installation of a LULA and construction of a barrier free public washroom, barrier free front service counter and barrier free main building entrance.

### **2014**

2014 Municipal Election were conducted using the Vote by Mail alternate voting method to ensure all residents eligible to vote had access to do so. On voting day the the Recreation Complex was used for those who chose to cast their ballot personally, The Complex is considered to be the barrier free facility of choice within the community.

### **2013**

Policies were developed for Accessible Employment Standards within the municipality.

### **2012**

Bylaw No. 2466/12 was adopted, providing tax interest relief for low-income persons with disabilities.

### **2011**

In 2011, the Regional Recreation Complex purchased a new mobile aquatic chair to augment the accessibility of the salt water pool.

An amendment to the traffic bylaw permitted additional Handicapped Parking at the Regional Recreation Complex and Public Library.

Staff implemented changes to the Municipal Website in 2011, allowing for easier navigation as well as incorporating a new font (Verdana) that is recognized as an accessible font by Accessibility Experts.

In December of 2011, Council adopted a resolution supporting the development of a barrier free/accessible park.

## **2010**

In 2010 it was recognized that a means to share information for interrupted services was required. Policies and forms were created and adopted by Council to ensure this information can be shared in a timely fashion. These interruptions can be posted on the Community Channel, Facebook, Municipal Website and LED sign.

The public washroom doors at the Regional Recreation Complex were removed to allow easier access for those with any type of disability.

A new Specialized Transit Bus was purchased in 2010, allowing residents and visitors with disabilities to access via special transit service businesses and facilities within town limits.

2010 Municipal Elections were held at the Regional Recreation Complex; this facility is recognized as being an accessible voting location by the Province of Ontario.

Policies for Accessible Customer Service and Special Transit services were developed.

## **Review and monitoring the process**

This plan will be reviewed not less than once every five years, allowing Council, staff and the public to monitor the barriers identified and the direction to which the Municipality is moving to remove all barriers under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

## **Communication of the Plan**

This plan is available on the municipal website, as well as at the municipal office and will be available in an accessible format upon request.

This is a living document that can be changed and modified as accessibility issues arise and progress is made.

